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Letter to the Editor

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir:

I feel moved to call to your attention an item from Mr. Jackson's article in the February issue of *The Iowa Science Teachers' Journal*, "A Method of Teaching Evolution in High School." Though it is not the major area of the article's discussion, the author's treatment of the Earth's origin irritated me.

When I was very young, the Chamberlain-Moulton hypothesis of planetary formation had already fallen into disfavor. Its perpetuation in elementary and high school texts disturbed me, but I assumed that it was due to the age of the texts. Mr. Jackson's article makes it appear to be due to the inability of teachers to keep abreast of developments of the past twenty years or so.

It can be shown mathematically that the theory cannot be valid. The main objection to the theory has to do with the distribution of angular momentum in the solar system. I do not intend to go into all the mathematics here. A treatment in lay terms is, however, available in three books by Prof. George Gamow, "The Birth and Death of the Sun," "The Biography of the Earth," and "One, Two, Three, Infinity." More recent theory, which is easily adaptable to high school teaching, is therein also explained.

Also, on less analytical grounds, I would object to the statement that the survival of a mutation in a population depends on its usefulness to the population. This may be true among bees and ants, but I am certain that a mutated Tyrannosaur which is more

ferocious and powerful will survive, as will its progeny, regardless of its usefulness to the other Tyrannosauri.

I suggest, then, that the teaching of discredited theories be discouraged since the goal of science and education is truth.

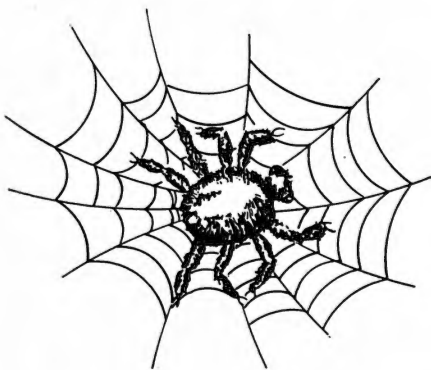
Sincerely yours,

Wm. W. Berg

Teaching assistant, Math., I.S.U.

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